



BUSINESS SUPPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

7 JULY 2022

ATTENDANCE OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Report from: Councillor Doe, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services

Summary

This report sets out activities and progress on work areas within the Housing and Community Services Portfolio, which fall within the remit of this Committee. This information is provided in relation to the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services being held to account.

1. Background

1.1 The areas within the terms of reference of this Overview and Scrutiny Committee and covered by the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services are:

- Homelessness and housing options
- Housing management and allocations
- Housing strategy
- Private sector housing, DFGs and adaptations
- Housing Landlord Services
 - Income management
 - Tenancy management
 - Repairs and maintenance
 - Homes for Independent Living
 - Estate Services
 - Community Development and Business Development
- Development of the Council's housing stock
- Libraries and Community Hubs
- Medway Adult Education

- Climate Change
- Voluntary Sector
- Kyndi/Medway Development Company

2. Homelessness and Housing Options

- 2.1 Between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022, of 3367 requests for housing assistance, there were 3,285 triage appointments completed, with the remainder either being, e.g., failed appointments, duplicated cases, not homeless or not eligible, or advice only. Compared to the same period in 2020/21 - which itself had seen a significant increase in footfall from the previous year to 2704 – the number of triaged cases represents a further increase of 21%. Consequently, levels of footfall continue to be above the pre-pandemic level which in 2019/20 saw 2499 approaches, or 31% less.
- 2.2 Significant drivers for footfall are consistent with previous years and continue to be the following:
- Eviction from private rented, social housing, or supported accommodation = 27%
 - Being asked to leave by family or friends = 23%
 - Leaving an institution (custody or hospital) with no accommodation = 5%
 - Being homeless as a victim of domestic abuse = 5%
 - Non-violent relationship breakdown = 3%
- 2.3 As highlighted above, one driver of homelessness is domestic abuse (DA) and a key area of work to prepare Housing Services to ensure the effective implementation and delivery of the provisions of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Specific to the Council, from July 2021 this Act introduced new definitions regarding domestic abuse (DA) and homelessness, as well as a new category of priority need for those homeless because of DA. To give effect to these provisions, the Housing Options Team worked proactively, jointly planning and working with partners, such as Medway Domestic Abuse Forum (MDAF) and Oasis (the local Domestic Abuse Service), as well as rewriting the service level Domestic Abuse Policy and procedures. The Council has employed a highly experienced independent domestic officer who is embedded as part of the Homelessness Team, with this officer being central to case assessments, safeguarding and safety planning. Further underpinning our service delivery for those homeless or at risk of such due to DA, is that all staff have undertaken accredited awareness training re domestic abuse, with update and refresher training undertaken regularly. Feedback from service users and local stakeholders has been positive in relation to these changes.
- 2.4 It is anticipated that a consequence of the Act coming into force in July 2021 will be an increase in applications from persons seeking assistance due to DA. Consistent with this, for the year, the council saw 149 requests for housing assistance from those approaching as homeless due to being victims of DA. This is an increase of 30% compared to 2020/21, which saw 115 approaches.
- 2.5 Despite the high and increasing level of demand for homelessness services, the council continues to deliver an effective, statutory compliant service and achieved

high levels of success in preventing and relieving homelessness. For those cases triaged and assessed as triggering a homeless duty, the service successfully prevented/relieved homelessness for 1067 homeless households, which is an increase of 21% compared to 2020/21 which saw 883.

2.6 A more detailed break-down of these cases is as follows:

Of the 810 approaches where a prevention duty was triggered 617 cases were successfully prevented of which:

- 291 were supported to sustain existing accommodation through mediation, negotiations with landlords, and financial support to clear arrears;
- 326 were supported to secure alternative accommodation (9 moved in with family, 60 into supported accommodation, 46 into social housing and 211 into private rented accommodation);

Of the 606 approaches where a relief duty was triggered 450 were successfully relieved of homelessness of which;

- 25 were referred to and accepted by another local authority due to having no local connection with Medway
- 68 secured social housing
- 109 secured supported accommodation
- 2 negotiated a return to owner occupier property
- 28 moved into partner's or friend's accommodation
- 210 secured alternative private rented accommodation
- 8 secured other options - caravan/boat/ or did not disclose.

2.7 Fundamental to our prevention and relief activity was our successful joint working initiatives with partners, both internal and external. This has included:

- Actively working to promote and maintain joint prevention working arrangements with a number of social landlords in the area, including MHS Homes, Orbit, MOAT and L&Q. Via joint prevention appointments and early interventions, including prevention payments to clear rent arrears, this has worked to seek to sustain tenancies for those tenants who were at risk of eviction, typically for rent arrears and or ASB.
- Proactively promoting co-operative working with private sector landlords to sustain tenancies for those tenants at risk of eviction and to secure new properties for those who were homeless. This has included: providing a dedicated landlord helpline as well as direct access to and support from our Private Rented Sector (PRS) Team; giving access to prevention fund payments to clear rent arrears and provide incentives, payments of rent in advance, and deposits to secure new or renew existing tenancies; the resumption of the landlord forum (in October 2021), which provides landlords with the opportunity to liaise with the Council and each, to air their views and concerns, seek support,

and share updated information and best practice; and the resumption of landlord accreditation training, to promote understanding and good practice amongst private sector landlords.

- Undertaking monthly joint prevention appointments at the Endeavour Foyer, a commissioned supported housing project, seeking to sustain accommodation for young people at risk of eviction.
- Liaising with Children's Services and Early Help to promote joint working and early intervention for customers at risk of eviction, or who are homeless and at risk of being found intentionally homeless. This included drafting and agreeing a joint leaving care protocol and adopting a Housing Services pledge to care leavers as a corporate parenting initiative.
- Working with floating support providers, to undertake prevention mediation work with excluders to seek to sustain accommodation for customers asked to leave and offering targeted housing support to customers with budgeting and benefit issues.
- Maintaining an effective joint working relationship with Medway Revenues and Benefits Service to ensure access to Discretionary Housing Payments is maximised for the prevention of homelessness.

2.8 Essential to the Council's successful prevention and relief activity is the joint work undertaken by the Private Rented Sector Team and Housing Options Teams to identify, match and secure accommodation for homeless applicants in the private rented sector. In accordance with this scheme, customers can access practical assistance as well as deposits, fees, rent in advance, and incentives to landlords, to enable them to secure private sector accommodation. There continues to be some uncertainty in the private rented sector market, with increasing rents outstripping tenants' ability to pay, even with assistance from welfare benefit housing cost payments, with there being reluctance from some landlords to let properties to homeless applicants, and indeed, some landlords selling up their property portfolios.

3. Temporary Accommodation

- 3.1 The Council continues to work with private landlords and housing providers to reduce the level of households in temporary accommodation by providing permanent options and at the end of March 2022, 310 households were in temporary accommodation compared to, 301 households at the end of March 2021, an increase of approximately 3%.
- 3.2 Recent benchmarking at the end of December 2021 showed the rate of households in temporary accommodation in Medway was 2.88 per 1000 households, this is slightly lower than the national rate of 4.07. Further benchmarking has been undertaken to identify how Medway Council compares with other similar sized unitary

authorities. In April 2022, the numbers in temporary accommodation Milton Keynes Council had a rate of 9.2 households per 1,000 households. Locally, Swale Borough Council had a rate of 5.76 in the same period.

4. Homechoice and allocations

- 4.1 The Council's Allocations policy sets out the framework Housing Associations operating in Medway will use when allocating social housing.
- 4.2 From April 2021 to the end of March 2022, 974 households have secured accommodation through Homechoice compared to 837 in the same period for the financial year 2020/21. There has been an increase in lettings compared to the same period last year and this is likely to be due to impact following the pandemic and increased void let rates.
- 4.3 The number of active households on the housing register on 31 March 2022 was 1,662 this is an increase from the number on the register at 2020/21-year end, which was 1,491. Applications to the register have also increased, between April 2021 to March 2022 there were 1,968 new applications compared to 790 in the same period in 2020/21.
- 4.4 From April 2021 to March 2022, the average waiting time for all types of property let was 13 months. The table below sets out the shortest waiting, longest and average waiting times for all properties let since April 2022:

Type / Size	No. of Lets	Shortest wait	Longest wait	Average wait
Sheltered accomm.	134	17 days	11 years	18 months
Studio general needs	13	3 weeks	5 years	8 months
1-bed general needs	249	5 days	7 years	6 months
2-bed flat or maisonette	306	11 days	5 years	6 months
2-bed house	105	13 days	6 years	11 months
3-bed flat or maisonette	18	8 weeks	32 months	12 months
3-bed house	128	5 weeks	5 years	13 months
4-bed	8	3 months	6 years	24 months
5-bed	2	4 months	34 months	19 months

5. Housing Strategy

- 5.1 The Housing Strategy and Partnerships Team works with Housing Associations, developers and the Homes England to identify opportunities to develop additional affordable housing. During the last reporting year, a total of 192 affordable housing units were delivered which was slightly under the target of 204 units. Several sites that were due for completion have experienced delays due to ongoing issues with the availability and increased cost of building materials in the sector.
- 5.2 Following the introduction of Government's 'First Homes' discounted home ownership scheme for first-time buyers, a working group was set up to implement this initiative within both Housing and Planning Services (First Homes are classed as Affordable Housing). To date, the key actions completed by the group include

training for Members and Planning Officers, the publication of a position statement, the development of a process map and the launch of an online facility for submitting applications and ongoing case management through Jadu. Medway Development Company were successful in a bid to the Homes England Early Delivery Programme for First Homes, securing funding to deliver up to 119 First Homes across the Garrison Point and Chatham Waterfront developments by March 2023. At the time of writing, the Garrison Point units are being actively marketed and 11 applications have been submitted so far, with further applications to be submitted shortly. First Homes are new build homes prioritised for first-time buyers and sold at a discount of at least 30%. Price and income caps apply, and local connection and/or key worker criteria can also be applied. Work will be taking place shortly to develop a local First Homes policy for Medway, looking to introduce local connection and/or key worker eligibility criteria.

- 5.3 The Housing Service takes an active role in future planning for additional schemes to meet Medway's needs, working with other partners including Children's Services and Adults Social Care, Public Health, charities, and other organisations to identify opportunities for joint working to help meet housing needs across Medway. The service is working to continually expand and improve partnership work, with a team dedicated specifically to this. This team works to share best practice, facilitate the development of existing and new partnerships and assisting wherever needed to ensure that Medway's services are focused on continuous improvement to benefit the people of Medway. This includes hosting and attending partnership events, gathering, and sharing sector best practice. Work continues with the Homelessness Forum and Task and Finish groups for Rough Sleeping and Young People. Provision of advice and guidance to voluntary sector partners continues around service development and capacity building. Last year, on World Homeless Day (10 October 2021) colleagues who worked on the 'everyone in' were celebrated and we ran a social media campaign will run around myths and facts, for example, yes people who are sleeping rough can still claim welfare benefits, even without a fixed address. We also gathered sector service feedback around what they would like to see moving forward around Rough Sleeper Initiative projects.
- 5.4 During 2021/22 the Council re-commissioned a range of Housing Related Support services to help meet client groups with specific housing related needs. This includes floating support (250 households at any one time), specialist domestic abuse advice and accommodation (14 refuge spaces and a community-based service in place, with new dispersed accommodation scheme/complex needs worker currently being commissioned), homeless hostels (82 rooms), schemes for offenders (42 rooms), young people (52 rooms, plus floating support for 8 young people at any one time) and other vulnerable client groups. The aims of these services are to assess, engage, advise and signpost clients to make incremental improvements to their independence, health and wellbeing with the ultimate goal of moving clients into more permanent and/or long-term housing solutions.
- 5.5 In addition, the team have worked closely with colleagues across Public Health, Children's Services and Adult Social Care to understand where the services may meet and to identify any gaps in provision, which will assist with successful, best

value and highest quality of our recommissioned services. This also entails close work with Revenue and Benefits colleagues to keep an overview of accommodation costs across the supported accommodation market.

5.6 The Rough Sleeping Initiative has been delivering successful interventions since its inception in July 2018. The initiative has been funded via grants from central government. The allocation for 2020-2021 was set at £1,117,068 and a bid for the continuation of funding in 2022-2025 has now been agreed providing certainty over future years provision, with the amount currently embargoed.

5.7 Key elements of the Rough Sleepers Initiative are:

- Medway's Rough Sleepers Coordinator who oversees the activity of in-house and commissioned services and is the first port of call for partner engagement and reporting to the DLUHC.
- An Outreach Team that visits rough sleepers to verify their status, eligibility for services and offer support and signposting. The team includes staff with specialist knowledge to provide additional input to vulnerable women and people with mental health support needs.
- Each rough sleeper has their needs and any risk factors assessed and this is used to design a short intervention plan to help them access support and accommodation.
- A Senior Resettlement Worker helps people leaving emergency or temporary accommodation and offers support and financial assistance for rough sleepers to move into accommodation including rent deposits, fees and money for essential furniture.
- Emergency housing for vulnerable rough sleepers to live in temporarily whilst more suitable accommodation is sought.
- Housing Navigators to provide ongoing support for rough sleepers and ex rough sleepers who have moved into accommodation, as well as working with people who have set up tents to see what can be done to move them into settled accommodation.
- Supported accommodation for rough sleepers with high levels of complex needs.
- Housing First flats with intensive support. This works well for more complex individuals who have not managed within traditional tenancies and supported housing environments. Additional funding to expand this service from 6 to 10 flats has been received.
- The Medway Assessment Centre service which provides short term interventions to get people off the street utilising a building provided by a voluntary sector partner whilst options are considered.

- A nine bedroomed guest house, with onsite support provided by One Big Family. This has been hugely successful as a move on project for people housed under 'everyone in' and needing a supportive environment to work with them to prepare for more independent accommodation settings.
 - New this year, funding has been granted to recruit a Rough Sleeping Prevention Officer, who will work between the RSI team and Housing Solutions to identify people at risk of sleeping rough and look to find accommodation solutions to avoid rough sleeping taking place.
 - Also new this year, funding for an employment project for rough sleepers has been received. This aims to provide employment and training opportunities for up to 20 people, with crowdfunded equipment and courses included.
- 5.8 As of July 2021, the team are now back to a 'Business-as-Usual' approach following significant success in complying with the Government's 'everyone in' request. A central core of this activity was the partnership work carried out at a local hotel, in conjunction with colleagues from Public Health, voluntary agencies, commissioned services and police and wider statutory services. There was engagement with all known people sleeping rough and those who were new to the streets due to the effects of the pandemic. A total of 167 people were accommodated in the hotel over the year, with only 13 being asked to leave due to serious anti-social behaviour. This compares very favourably with the national picture, with some authorities reporting 30% eviction rates due to unmanaged behaviour. Of those who were supported at the hotel, 113 were assisted into longer term accommodation.
- 5.9 On the 20 December 2021 Local Authorities were asked by Minister Eddie Hughes in light of the Omicron Covid variant to reopen accommodation to people who were rough sleeping and to make efforts to engage this group in access to the Covid vaccination. Through this program working with Medway Public Health, Medway Voluntary Sector Services and Create we were able to provide vaccinations to 108 people.
- 5.10 Through the winter period we have accommodated in our King Charles Hotel SWEP provision 89 people. With a total of 38 nights of SWEP. During the period, the Council engaged the support of Medway Street Angels and One Big Family to provide assistance to those people accommodated.
- 5.11 Over the last twelve months 60 people were taken into emergency accommodation. Of those 32 have now moved into long term accommodation (which is defined as having a tenure of at least 6 months). One challenge following the exit from the EU is ensuring that Council is able to work with people who do not have status to work or claim housing costs. Officers have assisted 9 people gain their appropriate status in the last 12 months to enable longer term sustainment of employment and housing.

5.12 The Service continues to monitor progress against the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024. The strategy identifies the Council's key priorities in addressing homelessness and meeting the Government's commitment to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and end rough sleeping by the end of the current parliament. An annual plan is put in place for January of each year.

6. Domestic Abuse Act 2021

6.1 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a duty on each tier one local authority in England to appoint a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board which it will consult as it performs certain specified functions. These are to:

- Assess the need for accommodation-based domestic abuse support for all victims in their area, including those who require cross-border support.
- Develop and publish a strategy for the provision of such support to cover their locality, having regard to the need's assessment.
- Give effect to the strategy (through commissioning / de-commissioning decisions).
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy.
- Report back to central government.

6.2 The Local Partnership Board has been set up and meeting quarterly, the Needs Assessment has been completed, the Strategy section amended, and new services and support commissioned.

6.3 The Council has used the New Burdens Funding to commission a new dispersed accommodation service to allow victims to safely remain in Medway if they wish to do so. This scheme also allows those to access specialist domestic abuse support when typical routes into Refuge are not suitable e.g. male victims, those with complex needs, families with older male children. Officers have commissioned a complex needs/access Independent Domestic Violence Advocate and a Domestic Abuse Housing Officer. A counselling service has been commissioned for victims/survivors and their children who are living in Refuge accommodation in Medway and are looking to extend this service to the dispersed accommodation scheme. Work is continuing to assess gaps in service provision and looking at new commissioning opportunities to support domestic abuse victims and their children.

7. Private Sector Housing, DFGs and Adaptations

7.1 The Council operates a predominantly reactive service that responds to complaints from private sector tenants, who are concerned about the safety of their home. The Housing Act 2004 provides duties and powers around the Housing Health and Rating System, powers for Banning Orders, Civil Penalties, and an extension for Rent Repayment Order provisions. The Private Sector Housing Team acts to improve property conditions by working with landlords and tenants to offer support and guidance of their legal obligations, this approach is in line with the Enforcement Concordat which provides a basis for fair, practical and consistent enforcement. It is

based on the principle that anyone likely to be subject to formal enforcement action should receive clear explanations of what they need to do to comply and have the opportunity to resolve before formal action is taken. This action varies dependent on the situation and history with a particular landlord, and officers will consider both formal and informal action to remove or reduce the hazards to an acceptable level, thus making the dwelling safer for the environment and tenants.

- 7.2 During the 2021/22 year a total of 948 properties were improved as a result of the Council's actions. The service received 486 requests for assistance and have been able to close 403 cases serving 112 Notices, 409 Sec239 notice of entry's and 563 enforcement letters have been issued via the enforcement process. 92 category 1 Hazards and 547 category 2 hazards have been identified, with 108 category 1 and 219 category 2 hazards being either reduced or removed from the residential properties.
- 7.3 Since April 2021 the Council has served ten Financial Penalty Notices of intent and 7 Financial Penalty final notices for failure to comply with HMO Management Breaches, failure to acquire an HMO licence, failure to comply with HMO licence conditions and failure to comply with Enforcement notices. 3 of these cases are now with our legal team for the recovery of the fines.
- 7.4 The Council is working to improve its energy efficiency offer to private occupiers. LA Flex is the extension of the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) scheme that helps UK households reduce their energy bills and carbon footprint. The LA Flex scheme allowed Local Authorities to expand the guidelines of eligibility. This allowed residents, to qualify for ECO funding often based on low income, health, age or area, giving Local Authorities the ability to support a wider number of residents or target specific areas/communities. Through 2021/22 the Council received 44 applications which included 31 loft cavity and wall insulations and 16 boiler replacements, during this period the Council agreed the top up funding to the value of £24,277.00 from the Disabled Facilities Grant.
- 7.5 The Mobile Homes (Requirements for Manager of Site to be a Fit and Proper Person) (England) Regulations 2020, (the Regulations) introduced a fit and proper person test for mobile homes site owners or the person appointed to manage the site, unless exempted by the Regulations. From 1 October 2021 the site owners of most residential mobile homes (Park homes) sites must ensure that they, or a person who they appoint to manage the site, is a fit and proper person.
- 7.6 The Fit and Proper Person requirements will make it an offence for a site licence holder to operate a park home site unless they appoint a manager who is a fit and proper person to do so. The purpose of the test is to improve management and to the raise standards in residential mobile homes sector.
- 7.7 Officers are currently reviewing all applications received and are carrying out the necessary checks to ensure that the applicant, or a person appointed to manage the site is a fit and proper person. Once the council is satisfied that the relevant person

meets the fit and proper requirements, they will be included on the Fit and Proper Register.

- 7.8 Medway Council undertakes alterations and adaptations to properties in order to assist Medway's residents to remain living independently in their homes and to reduce the need for support and care from adult's and children's services.
- 7.9 The importance of the disabled facility grant is to help support residents to live in suitable housing and remain independent for longer. Many disabled and older people spend most of their lives in their home and the accessibility, warmth and comfort of that home has a vital role to play in health and wellbeing. For families with disabled children the home enables children to grow and develop.
- 7.10 The need for an adaptation is identified through an assessment from an Occupational Therapist (OT) who will assess the needs of the applicant and recommend support and adaptations to be implemented.
- 7.11 During 2021/22 147 DFGs cases were approved, the range of work consists of flush floor showers, access to and from a property, various lifts, and access to various amenities. On average it is taking the team 6 months from receipt of the referral from to the completion of the works.

8. Housing Landlord Service

- 8.1. Performance across Landlord Services continues to be strong and this year and as part of the review of the Business Plan the service took part in a national benchmarking exercise of costs, performance, and customer satisfaction.
- 8.2. The key results for 2021/2022, when comparing Medway Landlord services to similar sized organisations are as follows:
 - Satisfaction with the last repair = 98.5% - top quartile
 - % of Rent collected = 100.72% - top quartile
 - % of current tenant arrears = 1.4% - top quartile
 - Former tenant arrears = 1.28% median quartile
 - % Void loss = 2.4% - median quartile
 - % of dwellings with a valid gas safety certificate = 100% - top quartile
 - % of repairs completed at the first visit = 99.9% - top quartile
 - % of repair appointments kept = 99.237% - top quartile
 - ASB cases per 1,000 properties = 18.72 – top quartile

9. Repairs and Maintenance

9.1 The repairs and maintenance service delivered by Mears Group Plc continues to perform well and shows comparable levels of service when benchmarked against similar organisations.

9.2 Performance highlights are as follows from September 2021 to March 2022:

- 90.93% (427/470) of customers that returned a customer satisfaction survey were satisfied with the overall repairs service
- 89.14% (410/470) of customers that returned a customer satisfaction survey were satisfied with the quality of the repair work
- The average number of days to complete a responsive repair was 7 calendar days.
- As of 31 March 2022, the Council had a 99.89% gas compliancy record.

9.3 Out of the responsive repairs completed in this period:

- 99.23% of emergency repairs were completed on time, against a local target of 100%
- 99.61% of urgent repairs were completed on time, against a local target of 100%
- 98.80% of routine repairs were completed on time, against a local target of 99%
- 99.20% of repair appointments were kept, against a local target of 99.5%
- 0.4% of responsive repair recalls against a local target of <=1%

9.4 Throughout the financial year 2020/21 the council invested in properties through the planned and capital works programme. Between April 2021 and March 2022, the following capital works were completed, investing £2.7m in existing housing stock:

- Asbestos surveys – 215
- CO2 detectors – 172
- Bathrooms – 113
- Boilers – 261
- Front doors – 24
- Rear doors – 22
- Electrical tests – 462
- Electrical rewires – 34
- Smoke detectors – 118
- Kitchens – 69

9.5 Performance highlights in respect of compliance include;

- 2,738 LGSR's (gas safety) completed - overall compliance 100 %
- 591 properties had a PIR (electrical safety) within a 10-year period – 100 % compliant

- 157 Asbestos surveys have been completed with £75,000 of asbestos removed
- Water weekly flushing for the year – 100% compliant
- Lifts – annual inspection to passenger lifts – 100% completed
- £570,000 has been spent on FRA remedial work and smoke detection upgrades across the stock.

9.6 The Council has reviewed how Compliance is managed, delivered, monitored and reviewed. A new compliance monitoring framework has been developed to improve how the HRA to monitors and reports on compliance, this will be made available to tenants during 2022/223. Resources have also increased, recruiting a Compliance Project Manager to oversee competent and accredited contractors to deliver these work streams. The Landlord Service has also introduced a new Resident Liaison Officer post to engage residents around their properties and assist in resolving issues, concerns, and complaints.

9.7 The Council has also made good progress regarding energy and the journey to getting to EPC C by 2030 and carbon neutral by 2050. The HRA purchased energy modelling software programme which details the current EPC performance of the stock and identifies measures to improve the properties energy performance. In addition, 200 EPC surveys were completed during the year with the stock's average EPC score at C (71.2 points).

10. Re-letting void properties

10.1 Between April 2021 and March 2022, it took on average 28 calendar days to let normal voids against a target of 18 calendar days. This is a decrease from 32 days at year end (2020/21) Due to the effects of Covid-19, the increase in days to relet properties is something that has been felt across the sector. Recent benchmarking results identify that Medway Council are in the lower median quartile compared to other providers with a similar stock size for the average time to re let council dwellings.

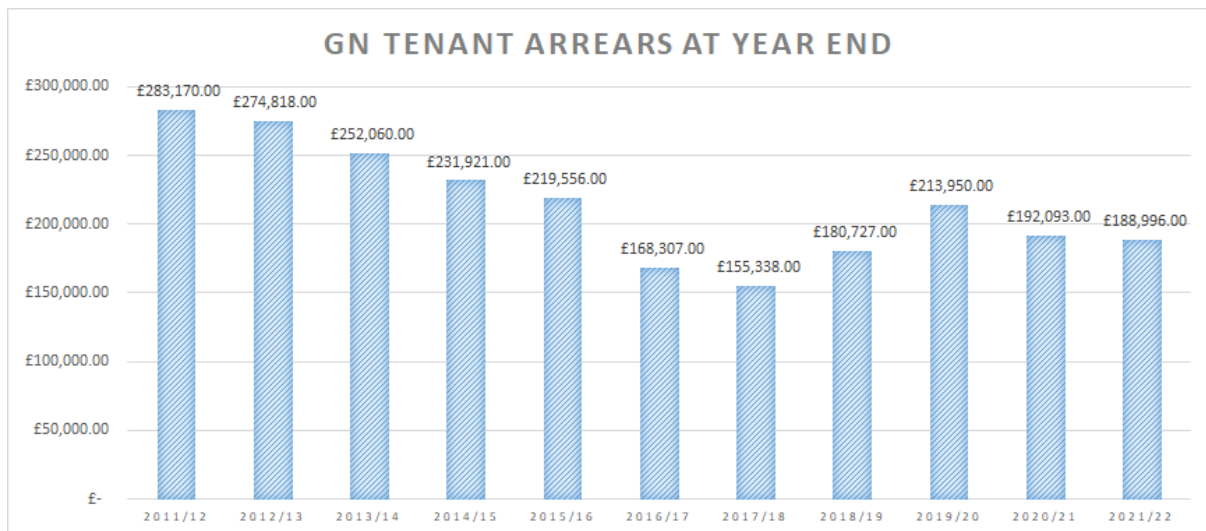
11. Income management

11.1 Universal Credit (UC) has been 'live' in Medway since May 2018, and it currently affects new claimants or existing benefit claimants who have a change in circumstances that triggers a move from the old benefits system to UC. As at end March 2022, there were 850 (29% of all tenancies) council tenants on UC.

11.2 It is well known that nationally the introduction of UC is leading to increased rent arrears for social landlords, and although arrears have only slightly increased in comparison to last year arrears for those on UC is much higher than other tenants. As of end of March 2022, 62.57% of all current rent arrears are attributable to the 29% of council tenants on UC (total arrears, £188,996 of which £124,191 attributable to tenants on UC).

11.3 The chart below shows the year end comparison for arrears in the general needs stock, including Homes for Independent Living (sheltered housing). Although historically there has been a year-on-year reduction since 2012, arrears rose slightly

in 2018/19 compared to 2017/18; this is largely associated with the effects of Universal Credit. However, the arrears decreased during 2020/21 and slightly again in 2021/22. With the full rollout of UC underway and the cost of living increasing it is expected that arrears will rise.



- 11.4 The percentage of current tenant rent arrears against the annual rent roll as at the 31/03/2022 stood at 1.32% against a target of 1.65% (1.37% at the same point of time last year).
- 11.5 Benchmarking has identified that the rent collection rate and current arrears position within Landlord Services is very favourable in terms of performance against other similar organisations.
- 11.6 Garage arrears have also reduced from a year end figure of £565 to £357 (as of 31/03/2022).
12. Tenancy Sustainment
- 12.1 Landlord Services Tenancy Sustainment Team continue to assist tenants facing financial difficulties. Including assisting customers to maximise their benefits, support them with budgeting and assist with areas of financial wellbeing.
- 12.2 The team provide drop-in services at the Twydall Hub and are looking at other venues, to allow Council Tenants quick and easy access to services.
- 12.3 In the financial year 2021/22, the Tenancy Sustainment Team have assisted Council tenants to gain over £192,000 in backdated benefits and lump sums and an estimated figure in excess of £577,000 per year in on-going benefits.
- 12.4 The team continue to be proactive in identifying customers that may need additional support by attending signups for HRA accommodation. This allows them to identify those that require assistance with transferring their benefits to the new address and those that might require additional help.

13. Tenancy Management

- 13.1 Tackling anti-social behaviour continues to be a high priority for the Housing Management Team. The handling of cases is now back into the Tenancy Team from the Community Safety Team to manage, and this is currently under review of how this is delivered in the future. The service has conducted a hotspot review of ASB areas and is investigating the provision of a specific ASB app for recording, reporting and monitoring additionally we will be looking at the provision of rapid deployment CCTV that can be installed and removed as and when issues occur.
- 13.2 A review of the Medway Council policy around using Flexible Tenancies is to be considered, as many social landlords are moving away from the use of these to Secure Term Tenancies.
- 13.3 Since April 2021, 308 flexible tenancies have been reviewed, all of which have been recommended to renew. Officers will assess this information and determine if a review should be undertaken of the Council's Tenancy Strategy, which currently states a preference for five-year flexible tenancies.
- 13.4 The Council's Mutual Exchange Policy (where social housing tenants swap tenancies with each other) was updated in 2019 to allow some more flexibility to tenants. Since April 2021 there have been 23 applications received, which have so far resulted in 17 tenants moving home. This is good news for the Council because it means tenants are finding their own suitable housing that meets their needs and preferences, without the Council incurring the costs of voids and relets.

14. Evictions

- 14.1 Between April 2021 and 31 March 2022 there has been a total of 3 evictions, of which 2 were for rent arrears and 1 was a tenancy related issue.
- 14.2 Eviction is always seen as the last resort by the Council and Landlord Services is required to follow strict pre-court protocols before being able to obtain a court order for evictions. These protocols include engaging and working with the tenants to try and sustain their tenancy, including referring them to support agencies where necessary. Assistance offered to tenants facing eviction for arrears includes referrals to the Welfare Reform Team that helps with debt management and additional signposting to debt advice agencies.

15. Homes for Independent Living (Sheltered Housing)

- 15.1 Satisfaction with the cleanliness of the schemes remains high with the latest satisfaction surveys results across all 8 schemes as below (From April 2021 to March 2022):
- Cleaning carried out to schedule = 92.06%
 - Laundry room clean = 96.55%
 - Communal Kitchen and Lounge clean and tidy = 96.55%
 - Communal Hallways and Staircases clean = 96.97%

15.2 The Housing Service continues to work with residents to ensure that they can remain living independently in their own homes. Assistance includes, but is not limited to:

- Extra help/support from the scheme support officer
- Referrals to external agencies – Age Concern, Dementia groups & hospital
- Support packages – discussions with next of kins, families and friends
- Care packages – carers visiting from one up to four visits a day, liaising with care agencies and social services
- Management moves, where a tenants health deteriorates, discussions take place about transferring from first floor to ground floor to comply with fire safety.
- At the end of the 2021/22 reporting year a total of 107 scheme residents were being assisted to remain living independently within the schemes (all others a living independently without a need for support but can engage in support at any point should a need arise).

16. Estate Services

16.1 The NORSE cleaning contract for Estates has now entered the seventh year.

16.2 The seventh year of the Estate Services contract provided by NORSE was commenced from October 2021. Performance Highlights are as follows:

- Estates Passing Inspection = 100%
- Fly-tipped Waste moved to safe location in 1 working day = 100%
- Estate cleaning schedule delivery of service on time = 100%
- Customer Satisfaction = 96.42%

17. Community Development and Business Development

17.1 The Policy and Partnerships Team have been adapting over the past year to encourage engagement in a greater variety of ways:

- Online consultations
- Increased use of social media
- Virtual games nights
- Activity packs for HFIL tenants

17.2 Since the easing of restrictions, the team have been able to hold in person meetings and some events on estates. Since June 2021, 5 Estate Champions meetings and 3 events at Hazlemere Drive including community planting with Medway Adult Education, Football sessions with Medway Sport and consultations around new play area equipment have been held.

17.3 A new resident communication scrutiny group has recently been established for the service to gain greater insight into how customers prefer to receive communications

as well as representatives having input into how communications look and feel, and the type of language used.

- 17.4 The Annual Report has recently been published, with input from customers and ensured this was communicated to residents through a variety of channels.
 - 17.5 Since the publication of the Social Housing White Paper in November 2020, a White Paper action plan and working group has been established to develop the service in line with the expected standards and the expectations of customers.
 - 17.6 A monthly newsletter is sent to all tenants and leaseholders who have an email address registered. Online engagement through social media continues to increase, with a total of 822 followers on Facebook currently.
 - 17.7 In May 2021, the Business Development Officer received an award as part of the Kent Engagement Group's Extraordinary Awards. This highlighted the officer's commitment to the service and recognition of always going over and above the remit of the role to help colleagues and improve the service for customers.
18. Development of New Council Stock
- 18.1 Through 2020/21 officers have been working to establish the capacity of the Housing Revenue Account for the development of new rented homes. This has set that ambition for the Housing Revenue Account to increase its housing stock by one percent year on year over the next 10 years.
 - 18.2 Whilst this number is still relatively small in relation to demand, the HRA has an obligation to ensure that its broader business plan remains sustainable and able to satisfy other demands and government targets such as the decarbonisation of stock by 2050.
 - 18.3 After the successful delivery of Phase 3 which consisted of 6 bungalows being built at Petham Green, Twydall, the HRA is now moving forward with phase 4. Phase four currently consists of three sites in Twydall and will deliver 14 two-bedroom houses, five two-bedroom houses and nine one-bedroom bungalows.
 - 18.4 The contract for phase four was awarded to Build Associates LTD (following the previous contractor ceasing to trade). Works on site started in August 2021 and are scheduled to completed in November 2022. Officers and the contractor continue to liaise closely with residents to inform them of development progress and any potential disruption. Properties will be let at affordable rents (capped at the Local Housing Allowance).
 - 18.5 Officers have submitted a planning application in relation to a brownfield site located on the former Lennox Wood site in Twydall and will shortly submit an application for one further brownfield site at Aburound House. It is anticipated that the sites will deliver between 35 and 40 new units and that works will be likely to start in March 2023 subject to receiving planning approval.
 - 18.6 The Council has also agreed to purchase from Medway Development Company (MDC) the Britton Farm site which will result in the HRA acquiring a further 44 units.

The block is situated close to existing HRA housing and will be let and affordable rents (capped at the Local Housing Allowance).

- 18.7 Officers continue to explore a range of other sites to provide a pipeline of sites that will enable a continued supply of newly built Council homes.

19. Libraries and Community Hubs

- 19.1 Community Hubs and Libraries have continued to emerge and grow out of the pandemic and continue to play a major role in the cultural and educational life of Medway. They are adamant they have a vital role to play in putting Medway on the map and are one of the many ingredients in supporting Medway as it goes from strength to strength.
- 19.2 The development of a five-year Community Hubs and Libraries Business Plan has focused the service on its post-pandemic role in the community building on recent service and building improvements. Our transformation programme continues with Wigmore Library's transformation to a Community Hub in March 2020. Wigmore is one of the six Community Hubs (Gillingham, Chatham, Rochester, Twydall and Strood) and 2022/23 budget setting agreed further capital funds to transform Lordswood Library into a Community Hub and funding agreed to develop options for Walderslade Hook Meadow Library and Community Halls. The continued investment in creating modern fit-for-purpose buildings, enhances the services we provide allowing them to be more reflective of the needs of residents and providing that important public facing, accessible, in-person resource that builds healthy and active communities
- 19.3 A new five-year business plan has been agreed that defines a confident future for Medway's Community Hub's and Library Service placing them at the heart of every community. It sets a clear and ambitious vision and commitments to ensure this vital service continues to be relevant, resilient, engaging, accessible and excellent.
- 19.4 Set against a national and local backdrop the vision is for Medway's Community Hub and Library Service to be:

Ambitious	Provoking exciting new ideas and collaborations
Agile	Ensuring a flexible high-quality service
Creative	Harnessing the power of words and language for social good
Engaging	Reflective of our diverse communities needs
Sustainable	Providing a strong future proofed service that is invested in

- 19.5 Through our research and benchmarking we have developed a plan consisting of six themes and a series of commitments, underpinned by an action plan, which will be delivered by the service and collaboratively with partners. The themes are:

Theme 1 Creative Community Connections

We will clearly identify where the service needs to reach further into our communities building quality creative and learning partnership that support public health, cultural strategy, climate change and Child-Friendly Medway priorities.

Theme 2 Digital Futures

We will understand the future digital needs of our communities improving our digital environment, future proofing it to match these demands, guaranteeing residents have easy and supported access to digital information and services where they need it.

Theme 3 The Right Resources

We will maximise our resources to maximise our impact, ensuring our staff and buildings are used to their full potential. We will make the most of regeneration opportunities to develop our services to ensure reflect the needs of our existing and future communities, offering a safe and accessible spaces where all residents feel welcomed.

Theme 4 Commercial Opportunities

We will use our strong customer base to grow our commercial activity through sales of products and services, developing a better offer for businesses and commercial services so they can connect to our thousands of customers, their potential customers.

Theme 5 Better for the Environment

We will work collaboratively with colleagues in Climate change, ITC, HR, procurement and capital project colleagues to reduce our own carbon footprint and will utilise the access we have to our creative community connections and one million visitors to engage and work with our residents.

19.6 Since the last report have provided a whole series of successful events and activities for residents, both from its own staffing resources or by working with the local creative sector. Notable examples include:

- The Wigmore Lectures continue to go from strength to strength with all lectures mostly sold out. Lectures included:
- Bob Ogley's 'A Local Newspaperman'
- Kent Yuletide traditions
- Golden Age of Comedy Songs
- The Story of English Freedom
- Reminiscences of an Immigrant: Life in Soviet Russia

19.7 Because of this success next year's programme will again include some Wigmore on the Road lectures visiting libraries across Medway.

- 'Fun with Words' creative writing workshops was five workshops at Chatham Community Hub, aimed at families and led by local poet.
- National Storytelling Week was celebrated with renowned children's author Ellie Irving who worked in our libraries with three local schools.

- The 'Circle of Six Women' project saw the return of author Jenny Godfrey for International Women's Day. The project, which has received additional funding from Arts Council England, uncovers local feminist heroes with personal connections to Gillingham and links to the Suffragette movement. The Six Women are Sarah Forbes Bonetta, Dame Kathleen Courtney, Dr Lorna Wing, Rosemary Desmond Boswell Tonks, Verna Holmes and Eileen (Tirzah) Garwood. Author Jenny Godfrey will be hosting a free public talk at Gillingham Library to discuss the Six Women, including Kathleen Courtney, Suffragist and peace campaigner and the action that was taken for women's equality in 1911.
- 'Rainbows in a Jar' NHS book launch was a spoken word and poetry event with all local writers.
- Holocaust Memorial Day was marked with a family drop-in workshop delivered by local artist Christopher Sacre
- Poet Laureate Simon Armitage visited Chatham Community Hub as part of his national tour and an audience of 150 remains the best supported of his tour so far.
- Schools in numbers are continuing to return to visit their local library. To celebrate World Book Day, Libraries entertained 15 schools and many classes across Medway.
- Luton Library was given a Family Arts Award and now runs a successful Saturday morning Arts club for young people.
- Exhibitions continue to educate and entertain across the service including 'Hidden Heroines: the untold stories of the woman of the Dockyard' at Chatham and at Gillingham 'The Fight for Rights: Women's Suffrage in Medway.'
- Songs & Scones, a new project between Live Music Now, Medway Libraries and Medway Culture Team has launched, which invites older, isolated people for live music, company and refreshments at their local libraries in a monthly event series.

Medway Archives Centre

- 19.8 Medway Archive Centre has been awarded Archive Service Accreditation by The National Archives.
- 19.9 The Medway Archives Centre in Strood, aims to help residents and visitors discover the stories of Medway's people and places and includes a wide range of collections documenting the history of the Medway area, from the 11th century until present day. This includes original documents and records, books, plans, maps and photographs which are open to everyone.
- 19.10 Accredited Archive Services ensure the long-term collection, preservation and accessibility of our archive heritage. Accreditation is the UK quality standard which recognises good performance in all areas of archive service delivery.

- 19.11 Achieving accredited status demonstrates that Medway Archives Centre has met clearly defined national standards relating to management and resourcing; the care of its unique collections and what the service offers to its entire range of users. Many residents visit the Medway Archives Centre in Bryant Road to research their family history, the history of their house or other buildings, or the history and geography of the local area. Others visit for educational research, or to find inspiration for creative projects.
- 19.12 The centre continues to actively engage with its users and audiences. A new series of Saturday morning drop in talks, with topics such as 'Focus on Chatham Intra' and 'Focus on House History', 'Outing Medway's Past: the LGBTQIA and the history of the Medway Towns' have all been very well attended
- 19.13 Exhibitions continue to prove popular and this year two major examples 'Photographic Exhibition of the Medway Universities: Now and 116 years ago' and 'Chatham Intra: Photographers in the Victorian Era' are being presented.

Partnerships

- 19.14 Our work with partners is a major asset across the service. These partnerships providing opportunities to improve and expand the service and support the delivery of Council Plan priorities. Over a hundred partnerships that currently exist, and these help us support Council Priorities.

Supporting Climate Change

- 19.15 MC Capital Projects Team and Climate Response Team working to reduce the carbon footprint of the service via the energy saving ReFit scheme. This is currently being rolled out with improvements including a combination of solar panels and heat source energy pumps at Wigmore, Gillingham, Lordswood, Rochester and Cuxton. Further plans are being developed for a ReFit phase two, looking at the viability of improving energy consumption at Chatham and Hoo Libraries.
- 19.16 Libraries work closely with the Climate Response team supporting promotion of the solar panel payment scheme for the public and advice and the Environmental Poetry competition for young people.

Supporting Child-Friendly Medway

- 19.17 Our Education and schools are important partners as we visit them, and they visit our services including substantial work supporting the school Improvement team to improve reading levels.
- 19.18 The Early Years Team remain a strong partner, particularly through the delivery of the national Bookstart scheme. This is particularly important now as the scheme is moving from a universal offer to a targeted offer.
- 19.19 Many Pre-Schools are now returning to visit their local library and take advantage of our book stock.

19.20 Our partnership with the Youth Service remains strong and will continue in that vein and grow as we work with them on the transformation of Lordswood and Walderslade Hook Meadow Libraries.

Supporting healthy active communities

19.21 Deaf Services and Housing and Welfare are enthusiastic users of the space at Twydall Community Hub Library.

19.22 Adult Education remain strong partners through the joint delivery of our services at Rochester Community Hub. We will in the future investigate how their new building in Gillingham can work with our Community Hub.

19.23 We are doing more collaborative work with the Public Health Team.

19.24 All Community Hubs and Libraries remain a much sought-after space for partners, agencies and community groups where we host Councillor, Kent Police and Community Safety surgeries, Hi Kent Network, University of the Third Age, the Stroke Association, as well as our knitting, sewing and arts groups.

Medway Digital Library

19.25 Medway's Digital Library has continued to be very popular. Our Public PC Network has been updated at Gillingham, Strood, Rainham, Hoo and Cuxton, giving a much more effective, modern, reliable offer. Feedback has been excellent.

19.26 Our Public Wi-Fi network is vital as more residents move using mobile devices to access information and services. Our network is currently being updated by ICT Team giving a faster more reliable service to residents.

19.27 Our collections of eBooks, eMagazines, eAudiobooks, eNewspapers and eComics continue to grow and we continue to expand our digital reference Library having recently acquired COBRA a resource aimed at job seekers, careers and new start-ups. We are also about to embark on a free trial of Brillder, a digital interactive educational games platform.

19.28 The growth of our digital services makes us a 24/7 service and we will continue to review and enhance this service to reflect the needs of our communities.

20. Medway Adult Education

20.1 Medway Adult Education continues to welcome back learners in normal class sizes, however it continues to be a challenging year for learner numbers. An excellent service continues to be provided to learners and the community. Online learning has continued to be a feature, with some of our maths, ESOL and community learning classes working well in an online setting. This has supported learners who have been cautious about returning to centre-based learning.

20.2 Once on course learner retention levels across all curriculum areas are good with adult skills retention at 91% and community learning retention at 94%. Pass rates

remain high, with adult skills at 88% and community learning at 100%. We are currently in exam season; therefore these figures will change by the end of the academic year.

- 20.3 The Service has recently had its business plan adopted by Cabinet, and work is underway to deliver against the identified priorities. A new government fund called Multiply, to improve numeracy skills has been launched and Medway provided an indicative amount of £1,458,000 to deliver a range of interventions across the next three years. This is being led by Medway Adult Education and the Investment Plan outlining how this will be spent is being developed.
- 20.4 The development of the new Medway Learning and Skills Hub at Britton Farm Mall is approaching completion and will be open to learners in September.

21. Climate Change

- 21.1 One year on from the publication of the Climate Change Action Plan in 2021, significant progress has been achieved despite continued challenges in managing both the response to Covid-19 and the response to the climate emergency. Highlights are set out below:
- Climate Emergency UK ranked the Council's Climate Change Action Plan as 31 out of all UK local authorities (in the top 10%). They gave the plan a score of 71% and issued full marks in three categories - measuring and setting emissions targets, co-benefits and education, skills, and training.
 - The Council's annual carbon emissions report has been published for the first time on the Council's website. See item 1.7 for an update on the Council's 2020/21 carbon emissions.
 - The Climate Response team hosted a variety of events during COP26 to engage with the residents and businesses of Medway including a Carbon Literacy Taster Session and Climate Cafés. The Cafés were delivered by students from the University of Kent, to ensure that those working on climate projects are looking after their mental wellbeing.
 - The team hosted the Climate Change Conversation event at Rochester Corn Exchange to hear the thoughts and ideas of the community about what they could be doing to help tackle the climate crisis. The team also supported the first Community Network meeting in February.
 - Medway Schools were invited to take part in a Walk to School COP26 initiative in October. It is estimated that over 5 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e) was saved by students walking to school rather than driving. The Climate Response team have also provided 3 climate themed classroom sessions at schools in Medway.
 - Thirteen pledges to help schools address climate change have been added to the Better Medway School Awards, in preparation for the programme relaunch in 2022.
 - Environmental pledges have been included in the Kent and Medway Healthy Workplace Award programme. [Case studies](#) of organisations taking action to

support carbon reduction are being shared with other businesses to inspire wider adoption.

- We are working with Kent County Council to support businesses to trial an Electric Vehicle (EV) for free. 13 Medway businesses have taken part in the trial so far.
- Officers have continued to work with Kent County Council on the Kent 600 project, an initiative to deliver a consistent electric vehicle charging point network across 150 public car parks across Kent. Connected Kerb, one of the UK's leading EV charge point providers, has been appointed to install the charge points in a phased programme over two years. The delivery programme and details of type of charging point are still to be confirmed however it is intended that each car park will have a mixture of fast and rapid charge points depending on the location. This project builds on the successful install of 34 charge points across three sites in Medway in 2021.
- As part of a free pilot scheme, the charge point operator Ubitricity will be assessing suitable on-street sites for the installation of 10 EV lamp post chargers. The selected locations will reflect the demand identified via the EV survey which is available on the Council's website. 403 responses to the survey had been received by the end of May 2022.
- The first phase of the £12m Refit Energy Efficiency and Low Carbon Programme started in October 2021, which will result in substantial energy and financial savings across Council buildings. So far 78 solar panels have been installed at Medway Crematorium, Cuxton, Gillingham and Lordswood Libraries. During 2022 more will be installed at Gun Wharf, Medway Park, Rochester AEC and the Central Theatre.
- Residents have been able to benefit from solar panels on their own properties through the Solar Together Kent scheme. The scheme allows residents of Medway to purchase solar panels at a competitive price and from pre-vetted and approved installers. So far 21 homeowners have installed a total of 206 panels, saving 16.5 tCO₂e. Over 750 Medway residents registered their interest in the second round of the scheme, of which 147 have accepted their personal offer for solar PV.
- The Green Homes Grant, a government funded initiative, has been supported and promoted. This scheme offers a wide range of energy-saving improvements in people's homes', through insulation measures and renewable heating technologies. This will help keep Medway's residents warm, while improving the sustainability of their properties and reducing emissions. A total of 137 residents have registered to find out more about their eligibility for the scheme.
- Medway Norse and our dedicated volunteers have planted over 500 trees. The first tree paid for by the community through the Medway Tree Fund was planted at Parkwood Shopping Centre, Rainham.
- We are on schedule to complete our [LED smart streetlighting replacement programme](#), during Summer 2022 and have installed 3984 streetlighting columns since the start of the programme. This work is expected to save Medway Council nearly £689,000 in energy costs in 2022/23.
- We have launched new [web pages](#) with tailored information for our residents, businesses, community organisations, landlords, schools and universities. Our

Climate Change Newsletter now has over 900 subscribers, and our Climate Change social media over 3000 followers.

- 21.2 In addition to the annual budget of £175k (including staff costs) which has been allocated towards the delivery of the Climate Change Action Plan, all of our departments have continued to seek out funding opportunities to support the climate agenda. Examples of successful grant funding awarded in 2021/22, (in addition to those reported at O&S in November 2021), include:
- £16,000 from the Net Zero Innovation Programme (Local Government Association and University College London) to facilitate engagement and knowledge transfer workshops with landlords to uncover their understanding of and planning for Net Zero – in collaboration with the University of Kent.
 - £76,000 from BEIS for a techno-economic feasibility study for a heat network.
 - £14,110 (Lot 1) allocated via the Air Quality Grant Programme by DEFRA for projects designed to reduce air pollutant exceedances and £113,400 (Lot 2) for projects that will improve knowledge and information about air quality.
- 21.3 A number of posts have been successfully appointed to and have been instrumental to the delivery of the Climate Change Action Plan. The following permanent posts are funded from the relevant departments core revenue budget:
- A Climate Response Engagement Officer and Climate Response Support Officer (in post from August 2021 and October 2021 respectively) – both officers are actively involved in delivering against the plan.
 - A Facilities Management and Energy Data and Monitoring Officer – assisting with the thorough and accurate collection and validation of energy data.
- 21.4 A “light touch” refreshed version of the Climate Change Action Plan and the 2020/21 annual carbon emissions report were presented to Cabinet on 5 July 2022. Copies of the report are available here: [Cabinet 5 July 2022](#)
- 21.5 The actions in the refreshed plan have been updated to reflect progress and also to check they are still achievable within the timescales and available funding. A significant number of “Do It Now” actions from within the Climate Change Action Plan have either been established as such that they are now considered fully embedded within core duties or fully completed.
- 21.6 New actions have been clearly marked as such in the refreshed plan. They largely focus on:
- assessing the carbon/financial impact of actions to assist with prioritisation
 - further embedding council values in the employee journey
 - activities to support the Cultural Strategy
 - further supporting staff to apply environmental considerations within procurement processes
 - building retrofit
 - school infrastructure – trees, planting and EV charge points

- engagement activities to support the delivery of the updated Climate Change Communications and Engagement Strategy.

21.7 Medway Council's emissions during 2020/21 were 8,303 tonnes of carbon dioxide (tCO₂e) – equating to a 2,207 tCO₂e or 21% reduction against the previous year and a 3,802 tCO₂e or 31.4% reduction compared with the baseline year (2018/19).

21.8 The reduction has been achieved through a combination of factors including:

- operational changes and a reduction of energy use within our buildings as a result of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic
- carbon reduction initiatives during this period; primarily the LED street lighting programme
- decarbonisation of the UK electricity grid

22. Voluntary Sector

22.1 Medway is home to over 1,000 voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations who work hard to improve the lives of residents. The sector is active across all aspects of society including health and social care; crime and disorder; culture and leisure; skills, employment, and enterprise; housing and transport; environment and carbon reduction; poverty reduction; inclusive growth and governance. The sector has been vital in supporting; the Council and residents during the pandemic, the impact of COVID-19 on those residents struggling financially and the increasing rising costs of living. Without these services the impact on statutory services would be significant.

22.2 Medway council offer support to the VCS commissioned services.

22.3 Current commissioned services are:

1-The Medway Better Together Consortium:

- Infrastructure to support the Voluntary Community Services Organisations in Medway, awarded to Medway Voluntary Action, paid from Adult Social Care
- Local Healthwatch, paid to Medway Council by the Department of Health. This is a statutory duty which will increase with the new Health and Care Bill.
- Welfare, Debt and Advice Support Service including Local Welfare Provision, awarded to Citizens Advice Medway (CAB).
- Carers Information, Guidance and Support, Young Carers and Carers Support Payments, awarded to Carers First This is a statutory service and funded from the Better Care Fund.
- Visually Impaired Support and Information Services, awarded to Kent Association for the Blind. It is a statutory duty that local authorities must maintain registers for blind (severely sight impaired) and partially sighted people (sight impaired). The register is to enable the Council to plan services to support these individuals, which Kent Association for the Blind also provides on behalf the Council.

22.4 The VCS infrastructure contract provider has generated significant income for the wider sector. Some specific outcomes for this contract include:

- 561 new organisations contacted the service
- Engaged with a total of 2,400 organisations
- 31% success rate of VCS organisations supported with income generation, bringing in £4,649 million in funding for local VCS organisations
- 81% of funding went to small and micro-organisations
- 97% of organisations felt that they had been supported with: advice and information, income generation and were better connected to other services as a result of using the service
- 526 organisations were supported to develop volunteering
- 1829 volunteer opportunities were identified despite the pandemic and the use of NHS Volunteer responders
- Successful bid for £604,109 from the Community Renewal fund made up of local VCS and consortium members to be cascade down to other smaller VCS organisations, MVA awarded £14k out for the funding
- £691K National Lottery funding over 6 VCS organisations
- Awarded £368,430.00 for VCS Transformation Academy and Alliance from the National Lottery, to support the contract and local VCS in Medway. £46k is to be paid directly to VCS partners

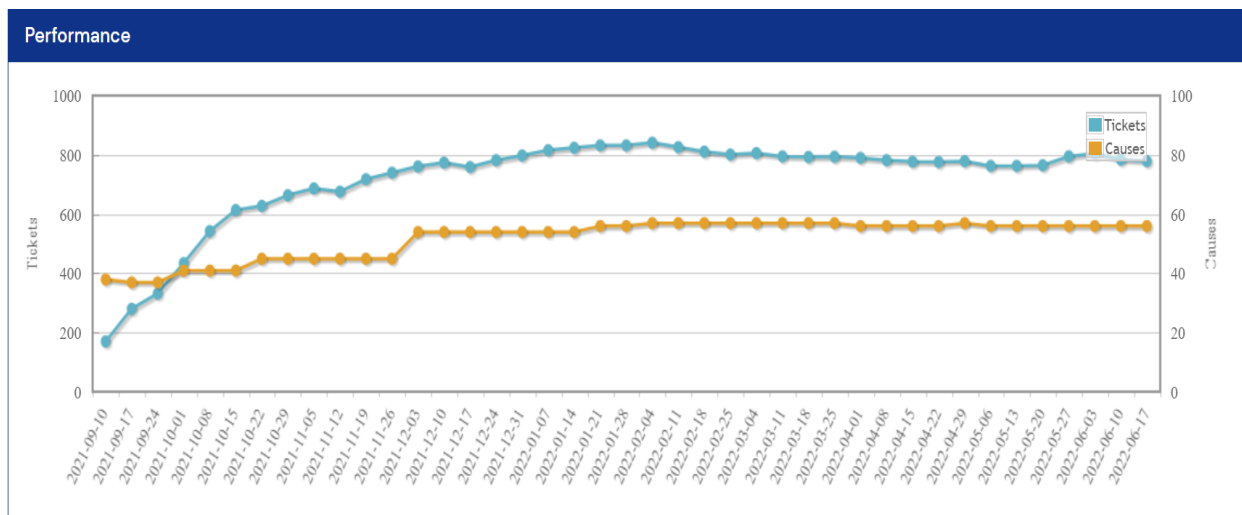
2- The Wellbeing Navigation Service:

22.5 The service supports the Integrated Care System, by improving outcomes (population health and Care) and access for all Medway residents. The supports people to stay well and live independently, helps those with conditions that could be preventable, those with long-term conditions and the aging population to get care as quickly as possible, from the best from resources. Care Navigation supports:

- NHS England's Long Term Plan
- The national social prescribing agenda, and links to other areas of the GP Five-year Framework and GP Forward View
- The Health and social Care White Paper, joining up care for people, places, and populations (Feb 2022)
- Supports the Levelling up the United Kingdom White Paper, aiming to increase a healthy and life expectancy narrow the gap between the highest and lowest areas by 2030
- Supports the Medway and Swale Social Prescribing Five Year Plan and the new Kent and Medway Social Prescribing Strategy

22.6 Some of these services support Medway Council and other health partners deliver key health and social care priorities. The VCS and third sector organisations work collaboratively to ensure the right services, advice and information is available to Medway residents and ensure the resilience of the Medway VCS sector while supporting volunteering opportunities.

- 22.7 The Medway and Swale Health and Care Partnership, of which Medway Council is a lead contributor, has committed and made progress to develop a framework that intends to support effective working relationships between the statutory and public sectors and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors (VCSE) at a time of decreasing resources. During the covid pandemic positive partnerships have been seen both at a senior leadership and strategic level, and also in specific projects where statutory and public sector health and social care staff alongside VCSE organisations have been working together closely and have developed considerable trust and respect. It is seen as essential by the Medway and Swale Health and Care Partnership (H&CP) that the skills and capacities of the VCSE are recognised and supported in order that VCSE organisations are acknowledged as having distinct features which enable it to make contributions to health and wellbeing within the local communities. There is recognition that the VCSE position within the communities has altered and in the absence of national policy agreement at local system level that we need to strengthen our collaboration to change our local infrastructure and respect and accept the different and valuable skills that each organisation provides. This framework will build on the work of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), a written agreement between statutory, public, voluntary and community sectors and other partners of how they will co-operate aims to go further in setting out a number of actions that will help us achieve our shared aim of strong and resilient communities supported by a thriving Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS).
- 22.8 At its meeting on 17 November 2020, the Cabinet agreed the establishment of the Medway Community Lottery for the purpose of raising funds to support good causes, benefitting the residents of Medway.
- 22.9 Gatherwell were appointed to operate the lottery and the Chief Operating Officer (COO), Phil Watts, and Deputy Leader, Howard Doe, were granted licences on behalf of the Council.
- 22.10 On 2 July 2021, the Deputy Leader and COO gave a presentation at the launch event arranged by MVA, to attract 'good causes' to join the new lottery platform and as of today there are 56 charities and other organisations live on the platform.
- 22.11 The tickets went on sale 07/09/2021 and the first draw took place on 09/10/2021. There are currently 374 people playing the lottery and between them they buy 779 tickets per month. It is true that both the number of ticket sales and new 'good causes' joining the platform have both plateaued since Christmas (see below), however these numbers are still relatively good and over the course of a year would generate £24,305 per annum for 'good causes'.



22.12 Of this around £8,340 would be paid into the Council's central fund. Thus far, no decisions have been regarding the deployment of this funding, however the Deputy Leader has identified a small group of officers, representing a number of services, who will help him to determine how to allocate these funds.

23. Kyndi/Medway Development Company (MDC)

23.1 Cabinet receives regular six-monthly reports on the performance of these Council owned companies. Members are invited to consider the previously published reports. These are set out below and will inform any questions Members have for the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services.

23.2 Reports to Cabinet were produced for the following meetings:

Kyndi – 8 March 2022 at agenda item 10: [Cabinet 8 March 2022](#)

23.3 MDC – 7 June 2022 at agenda item 8: [Cabinet 7 June 2022](#)

Lead officer contact:

Richard Hicks, Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive, 01634 332764
richard.hicks@medway.gov.uk

Phil Watts, Chief Operating Officer, 01634 332220
phil.watts@medway.gov.uk

Appendices

None.

Background papers

None.